UNITED
NATIONS

EP

Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme

Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/GC.19/25
22 November 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Nineteenth session
Nairobi, 27 January - 7 February 1997
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

PROGRAMME MATTERS

The role of the United Nations Environment Programme as secretariat of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities

Note by the Executive Director

Summary

The present document summarizes the role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as secretariat of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, as agreed at the Intergovernmental Conference held in Washington, D.C., from 23 October to 3 November 1995. It presents the subsequent stages of preparation of the implementation plan, including the conclusions on this issue of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) at its fourth session. Regional and international cooperation in the implementation of the Global Programme of Action, including the clearing-house mechanisms and activities relating to the assessment of the state of oceans and coastal waters, as well as to persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and sewage, is also discussed.

* UNEP/GC.19/1.

Na.96-0833 091296

101296

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly requested to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

(a) Take note of General Assembly resolution 51/xxx, adopted on xxxxxxx concerning institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Global Programme of Action;

(b) Endorse the proposed role for UNEP as secretariat of the Global Programme of Action;

(c) Take note of document UNEP/GC/19/INF.4, entitled "Institutional arrangements for implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities";

(d) Request the Executive Director to communicate with the governing bodies of the relevant intergovernmental organizations and programmes, to ensure their leading role in coordinating the development of the clearing-house mechanism in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 51/xxxxx.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The duty of States to protect the marine environment from land-based activities was placed squarely in the context of sustainable development by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992. Subsequently, the UNEP Governing Council, by its decision 17/20 of 21 May 1993, authorized the Executive Director of UNEP to initiate a preparatory process for the purpose of facilitating the adoption by Governments of a global programme of action for the protection of the marine environment from land-based activities. Governing Council decision 18/31 of 25 May 1995 provides additional directives on this issue.

2. Pursuant to these decisions, UNEP convened the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt a Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities in Washington, D.C., from 23 October to 3 November 1995. The Washington Conference adopted the Global Programme of Action and designated UNEP as its secretariat. It further requested that UNEP, as the coordinator and catalyst of environmental activities within the United Nations system and beyond, should, through its programmes and secretariat role, promote and facilitate implementation of the Global Programme of Action at the national level; promote and facilitate implementation at the regional, including subregional, level through, in particular, a revitalization of the Regional Seas Programme; and play a catalytic role in the implementation at the international level with other organizations and institutions.

3. The Washington Conference also requested UNEP to prepare a proposal outlining a practical plan for implementing the Global Programme of Action. This plan was to include a clear indication of how UNEP intends to carry out its function in this regards, including secretariat functions, its contributions to the clearing-house mechanism, proposals and actions taken on coordination among relevant United Nations and other organizations, and how the relevant UNEP programmes, including the Regional Seas Programme, could be strengthened to play an effective role in implementation of the Global Programme of Action. The present document briefly summarizes actions taken to date by UNEP to facilitate implementation of the Global Programme of Action.

II. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION

4. The implementation plan was prepared by UNEP, with contributions from a number of Governments, secretariats of regional seas programmes, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. It also takes into account the adopted Global Programme of Action, the report of the Washington Conference including the Washington Declaration, and the report of the Workshop Environmental Science, Comprehensiveness and Consistency in Global Decisions on Ocean Issues, held in London, from 30 November to 2 December 1995. A draft of the plan was subsequently reviewed during 1996 at the following three consultations:

(a) Interagency consultation (New York, 30 January): 1/ The consultation was attended by representatives of the following United Nations bodies, secretariat units, specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations: Comisión Permanente del Pacífico Sur (CPPS), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Land-Ocean Interactions in the Coastal Zone (LOICZ), South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), World Health Organization (WHO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Coordinating Unit for the Mediterranean Action Plan of UNEP (MEDU), World Conservation Union (IUCN), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank, International Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC), United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO);

(b) Intergovernmental consultation (New York, 1-2 February): The consultation was attended by representatives of Australia, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Iceland, Indonesia, Mexico, Netherlands, China, Peru, Poland, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Seychelles, United Kingdom and United States of America, as well as by observers from DPCSD, CPPS and SPREP; and

(c) Non-governmental organization consultation (New York, 6 February): All 27 non-governmental organizations that participated in the Washington Conference were invited to the consultation; representatives of five attended.

III. SUBMISSION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN TO THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

5. The draft implementation plan was presented to the CSD Inter-sessional Ad Hoc Working Group on Sectoral Issues held in New York, from 26 February to 1 March 1996, and to the fourth session of CSD, held in New York, from 18 April to 3 May 1996, for consideration within the context of its review of chapter 17 of Agenda 21: Oceans and seas. It served as a basis for the preparation by Governments of a draft resolution on institutional arrangements for implementation of the Global Programme of Action, to be considered by the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-first session. The revised implementation plan was submitted to an informal intergovernmental consultation, held in Geneva on 30 September and 1 October 1996, to which the same Governments as had attended the previous consultation were invited. The final draft implementation plan is now being presented to the nineteenth session of the UNEP Governing Council.

1/ The reports of this and other meetings referred to in this document and organized under UNEP auspices are available from UNEP upon request.

IV. APPOINTMENT OF THE ACTING COORDINATOR FOR THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION

6. In May 1996, the Executive Director of UNEP designated a UNEP staff member as Acting Coordinator for the Global Programme of Action, working in the UNEP Water Branch. The Acting Coordinator has subsequently been assisted by staff members from the UNEP Water Branch in the performance of specific tasks.

V. REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION AND THE ROLE OF THE UNEP REGIONAL SEAS PROGRAMME

7. In the Washington Declaration, Governments expressed their commitment to protect and preserve the marine environment from the impact of land-based activities, and declared their intention to do so by, inter alia, cooperating on a regional basis to coordinate efforts for maximum efficiency and to facilitate action at the national level.

8. The development of national and regional programmes of action is of primary importance for implementation of the Global Programme of Action. Thus, the organizations and structures involved in the regional seas programmes are a fundamental mechanism for developing and implementing both globally and regionally coordinated action programmes. National, subregional and regional action programmes are the cornerstone for successful implementation of the Global Programme of Action. Accordingly, fostering and facilitating the formulation, adoption and implementation of such programmes will be a central task of UNEP and its partner agencies.

9. Within this context, UNEP convened an Intersecretariat Consultation in Geneva, on 13 and 14 May 1996. Because of financial constraints, representatives of only eight regional programmes attended (although all 13 regions of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme are essential parts of the UNEP plan for implementing the Global Programme of Action): Black Sea Environmental Programme (BSEP), Caribbean Environment Programme, CPPS, MEDU, North-West Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP), Oslo and Paris Commissions (OSPAR), South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), SPREP and UNEP. The secretariats of the Eastern African and West and Central Africa action plans provided additional information relevant to their activities on implementation of the Global Programme of Action.

VI. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION

10. The Global Programme of Action drew attention to the crucial importance of effective international cooperation for its successful, cost-effective implementation. This cooperation plays a central role in enhancing capacity-building; technology transfer and cooperation and financial support. Moreover, the Global Programme of Action stressed that effective implementation of the Global Programme of Action also requires efficient support from the appropriate international agencies.

11. To facilitate its effective implementation, the Global Programme of Action also requested UNEP, as its secretariat, to maintain a close partnership with other organizations and bodies, as well as regional bodies supporting the implementation of regional seas and relevant freshwater programmes.

12. Within this context UNEP convened a Joint Intersecretariat/Interagency Consultation in Geneva, on 15 and 16 May 1996. The consultation was attended by representatives of the same eight regional programmes identified in paragraph 9 above, plus representatives of the following nine bodies: FAO, IAEA, IMO, IOC, UNDP, UNIDO, WHO, WMO and UNEP.

13. Strengthening of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Sub-Committee on Oceans and Coastal Areas was recommended by the London Workshop on Environmental Science, Comprehensiveness and Consistency in Global Decisions on Ocean Issues, to be used as an interagency forum with the aim of avoiding the establishment of new groups. In May 1996 in London, the ACC Sub-Committee provided an interagency forum for the exchange of relevant information on action by different agencies in implementation of the Global Programme of Action. The agencies agreed to set aside one day during its annual meetings for discussion of the Global Programme of Action.

14. The Sub-Committee also agreed to an informal meeting at IMO headquarters in London, in November 1996, specifically to concentrate on issues relating to implementation of the Global Programme of Action. UNEP will assume the chairmanship of the ACC Sub-Committee on Oceans and Coastal Areas with effect from 1 January 1997. Appropriate links will be established with the ACC Sub-Committee on Water, in its coordinating role dealing with freshwater.

VII. GLOBAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION CLEARING-HOUSE

15. By its decision 18/31 the UNEP Governing Council also requested the Executive Director to produce and make available to countries before the Washington Conference additional information on future funding requirements and opportunities, and on clearing-house activities. Pursuant to that decision, and on the basis of discussions at a consultation, UNEP prepared a document addressing those issues for the Washington Conference.

16. In addition, both the Global Programme of Action and the Washington Declaration recommended the establishment of a clearing-house as a priority for mobilizing experience and expertise, to include the facilitation of effective scientific, technical and financial cooperation, as well as capacity-building. As a first step towards establishing an inter-organizational group to develop the basic design and structure of the clearing-house data directory and its linkages to information delivery mechanisms, UNEP convened a Technical Meeting on the Clearing-house in Geneva, on 26 and 27 September 1996 to which the same Governments as had attended the previous consultations, as well as experienced organizations, were invited. The meeting was attended by representatives of six Governments: Australia, Canada, China, Netherlands, Poland and United States of America; three United Nations organizations: IOC, UNEP and WHO; and five regional programmes: MEDU, SACEP, SPREP, OSPAR and BSEP.

18. The meeting agreed that an effective clearing-house mechanism must be founded on close working relationships between the cooperative organizations. At the global level, the clearing-house will be structured around organizations responsible for source categories, as specified in the Global Programme of Action and further elaborated in the previously mentioned draft United Nations General Assembly resolution on institutional arrangements of the Global Programme of Action. It was hoped that the management and governing bodies of the organizations concerned would take rapid action to provide a mandate and resources for implementing the Global Programme of Action. This global level of clearing-house organization should ensure access to the body of international scientific and technical information and experience. A major regional clearing-house component is also necessary, to provide user access and to adapt information to local circumstances. The regional seas programmes and commissions responsible for regional sea areas will provide the regional institutional framework for clearing-house activities.

VIII. ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE OF OCEANS AND COASTAL WATERS

19. The Global Programme of Action pointed out that there is a need for regular reviews of the state of the world marine environment at the global level, and recommended the establishment of linkages with the activities of international programmes that focus on monitoring and assessing the state of the marine environment and relevant rivers system. The Global Programme of Action particularly identified the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Pollution (GESAMP) as a mechanism for scientific assessments of the impacts of land-based pollution upon the marine environment.

20. Based on a UNEP proposal to the twenty-sixth session of GESAMP, held in Paris, 25-29 March 1996, GESAMP established a standing Working Group on Marine Environmental Assessments and designated UNEP as the leading agency. A sub-group was also formed to prepare a report on land-based sources and activities affecting the quality and uses of the marine, coastal and associated freshwater environment, as a first step towards the next periodic assessment of the state of the marine environment. To this end, UNEP convened the inaugural session of the Working Group on Marine Environmental Assessments in Geneva, on 17 and 18 May 1996. The meeting established its working procedures, including the role of the GESAMP sponsoring agencies. The meeting was attended by the GESAMP technical secretaries, nine international experts and UNEP representatives.

IX. PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS AND SEWAGE

21. By its decision 18/31, the UNEP Governing Council requested the Executive Director to ensure linkages between the elements of the Global Programme of Action on persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and on the management and treatment of urban sewage and similar action being developed in other forums.

22. In the Washington Declaration, the representatives of Governments and the European Commission strongly supported the process set forth in UNEP Governing Council decisions 18/31 and 18/32 for addressing at the global level the priority issues of POPs and adequate treatment of waste water. They declared their commitment inter alia, to give priority to the treatment and management of waste water and industrial effluents; and to act to develop, in accordance with the provisions of the Global Programme of Action, a global and legally binding instrument to deal with POPs.

23. A meeting to establish an ad hoc working group on the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) was convened by UNEP on behalf of IOMC in October 1995. The working group subsequently met in March and June 1996 and developed a workplan, identified resource needs to implement the requirements of decision 18/32, and took note of the Washington Conference, wherein Governments called for a global legally binding instrument on POPs. The working group is supported in its efforts by UNEP and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) secretariat.

X. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

A. Regional workshops to address implementation of the Global Programme of Action

24. As indicated by UNEP during the Washington Conference, a series of workshops will be convened during 1996-1997 in each of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme regions, with a view to reaching agreement on regional strategic programmes to address land-based activities. The workshops will be attended by government-designated experts, representatives of relevant United Nations agencies, regional development banks, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. The workshops will comprise the following schedule (the dates and venues for those in 1997 are still tentative):

(a) South-East Pacific, in Lima, November 1996, for five States;

(b) Red Sea and Gulf of Aden/Kuwait Action Plan region, in Bahrain, December 1996, for 14 States;

(c) East Asian Seas, in Bangkok, February 1997, for 10 States;

(d) Mediterranean, in Athens, March 1997, for 20 States;

(e) South Pacific, in Apia, April 1997, for 19 States;

(f) Caribbean, in Kingston, May 1997, for 28 States;

(g) West and Central Africa, in Abidjan, June 1997, for 21 States;

(h) Eastern Africa, in Nairobi, July 1997, for nine States;

(i) South-West Atlantic, in Rio de Janeiro, August 1997, for three States;

(j) Black Sea, in Istanbul, September 1997, for six States;

(k) South Asian Seas, in Colombo, October 1997, for five States;

(l) Northwest Pacific, in Beijing, November 1997, for five States.

B. GESAMP assessment on land-based activities

25. As part of the activities of the GESAMP Working Group and its sub-group, several technical meetings and regional assessments - on which the global assessment will be based - are planned for 1997-2001. Some funds are available from the UNEP Trust Fund to support these activities. The report of the sub-group is expected to be finalized by 1998.

XI. FUNDS

26. The funding status of the various scheduled activities is as set out in the following table.

	Activities	Status
(a)	Regional workshops	Available funds (UNEP) to support one participant/country Proposals submitted to the Nordic countries and the Netherlands (July 1996) Proposals being prepared/submitted to GEF
(b)	GESAMP assessments	Additional funds to be secured Proposals submitted to the Nordic countries and the Netherlands (July 1996)
(c)	Establishment of the coordination office	An interim coordination office has been established as part of the UNEP Water Branch

---